English composition tutors: Why they are necessary and what they need to know

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ENGLISH COMPOSITION TUTORS: 
WHY THEY ARE NECESSARY 
AND WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW

A Thesis 
Presented to the 
Faculty of 
California State College, 
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment 
of the Requirements for the Degree 
Master of Arts 
in 
English Composition

by
Alice Jean Udall Glazier 
August 1981
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Chairman

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ABSTRACT

English composition tutors have become increasingly important in recent years for a number of reasons. Tutors must be more than good writers themselves in order to be effective; they also need to know explicitly the rules or principles of good writing. The purpose of this thesis is to show the need for good tutors and to discuss those basic rules of writing which tutors should know. Whenever possible, reasons are given for the rules, and specific examples are included to illustrate them. Sources of information are current acceptable writing handbooks.
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At a time when national assessment tests show disturbing trends in the writing abilities of American seventeen-year-old students, at a time when around half of the freshmen entering colleges are remedial writers, at a time when classroom drilling on grammar and punctuation skills is considered to be counter-productive, and at a time when teachers are being encouraged to make single-response comments on student composition papers, students by the thousands across this country are being sent to learning laboratories to master basic writing skills. Given these circumstances, then, competent English tutors have become a necessity, and there are many things they need to know about language and about writing: (1) just what constitutes prose writing, (2) current rules for acceptable usage or grammar, (3) standard guidelines for punctuation and mechanics, (4) rules governing the technical conventions of spelling, (5) how to write effective sentences, and (6) how to write effective paragraphs.
Chapter 1
Decline in Certain Writing Skills

Rex Brown, director of publications for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, speaking on "National Dimensions of Writing," told English teachers gathered at a writing conference July 10-11, 1981, at California State College, San Bernardino, some interesting facts which the NAEP has found out about writing in the last decade from three national assessments. (He also talked about national trends in reading, mathematics, literature, and science and explained how he thought they tied in with writing. These will be discussed later.) First of all, Brown claims that there are two different levels of literacy, Level A and Level B. Level A, the lower one, includes the basic or functional writing skills such as a knowledge of grammar, of correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, and the ability to write a complete sentence and a paragraph correctly: in other words, the skills considered necessary for minimal competency. Level B skills represent a higher standard of literacy, one concerned with the higher cognitive skills of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. This level includes the ability to master deep structure rather than surface structure aspects of writing and the ability to address different audiences in different
In five-year intervals starting in 1969, national assessments were made of seventeen-year-olds' writing skills. The first assessment showed that most of the students could handle the lower level skills, but few showed any variety of constructions or much range of writing options. The second assessment, in 1974, showed no difference in surface structure or in the number of mechanical errors, but it did show a decline in certain skills, indicated by more awkward constructions, more run-ons, less coherence, and less flexibility in applying skills differently as situations change. The most recent assessment, in 1979, contrary to frequent assertions made in popular magazines, again showed no change in the low-level writing skills (other than the fact that some gains were made on the part of minorities and low socioeconomic groups). But this latest study did show a gradual erosion of quality as far as the higher-level skills are concerned.

The same types of results were also found in other fields of education. For instance, in relation to literature, the latest study indicated that students' comprehension was quite good (that is, they got the gist of stories and poems), but they couldn't go any

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further. They showed no evidence of strategies or systematic approaches to analyzing texts in order to write good evaluation, analysis, or interpretation papers. And in mathematics, the lower-level skills such as adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing were staying about the same, but, again, the higher-level skills such as fractions, algebra, and problem analysis were declining. The implication is that the same cognitive skills are used for all these kinds of thinking and that helping students to learn or improve upon higher-level writing skills would ultimately help them in the higher levels of these other fields too.

In spite of the definite decline in higher-level writing skills, Brown remains quite optimistic about the situation because one of the possible reasons he gives for the decline in the higher skills is that teachers in recent years have spent most of their time teaching the fundamentals. So, he reasons, when teachers begin teaching the higher-level skills, the students will begin learning them. It can also be reasoned, then, that more students will necessarily have to go to the learning laboratories for instruction in the lower-level, basic skills if and when emphasis on them declines in the classroom.
Chapter 2
Problems of Remedial Writers

In spite of Brown's report that basic writing skills are not declining, colleges are crowded with new students who do not have those basic skills. Even though colleges have always had some freshmen students who could not write as well as their peers (students were routinely put into what were called "bonehead" English classes), the "new" remedial English program is a comparatively recent development. The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties ushered in a drive to raise the cultural level of the nation's poor and of its minorities. "Headstart" programs were instituted for underprivileged pre-schoolers, and open admission policies were put into effect in many colleges and universities for underprivileged young adults. This meant that increasing numbers of poorly prepared students (many from minority groups) began flocking onto college campuses, hoping to be magically transformed in one quarter or one semester into proficient enough writers to meet the academic requirements of higher education.

There are several reasons why remedial students come to college with the writing problems they have, according to Patricia Cross in Beyond the Open Door: New Students to Higher Education. Her study of their
backgrounds shows that (1) they have never written much, either in the classroom or outside of it, (2) they come from families or neighborhoods where people speak foreign languages or else non-prestigious dialects of English, and (3) they share a long-time mistrust of the educational system and an attitude of pessimism about their ever being able to learn anything or be understood in school. (Even though they share a fear and an expectation of failure in academic situations, this does not imply that they necessarily lack self-confidence or a sense of worth in areas other than academic.) Generally, they have non-academic interests, Cross reports, with only practical educational goals such as achieving vocational training or earning certain kinds of specific credentials. ² With these backgrounds, it is no wonder, then, that these students are not able to write at the level expected of them in college.

These remedial or "basic" writers also share several common features in the way they write, according

to Mina P. Shaughnessy, former director of the Learning Center at City University, New York. In her book *Errors and Expectations*, she indicates that (1) "they tend to produce. . . small numbers of words with large numbers of errors (roughly from fifteen to twenty-five errors per 300 words," (2) they seem to be limited as writers--but not necessarily as speakers--to a very narrow "range of syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical options," which forces them into an immature, rudimentary style of discourse or into a "dense and tangled prose" which their readers cannot understand, (3) they can write neither in their own voices nor in the meaningless style that Edward Friedenberg called "pasteurized prose" which many high school graduates write, and (4) "their errors and reluctances [do] not give way easily under instruction."^3

Chapter 3
Current Trends in Teaching

It is very difficult to know just what kind of instruction does the most good with these remedial students, or with any writing students, for that matter. Ross Winterowd, professor of English at the University of Southern California, gave a number of suggestions at the July 1981 writing conference at CSCSB which have ultimate significance for writing tutors as well as writing teachers. Winterowd maintains that a writing teacher must be a writer and must demonstrate it to the students. (This implies that, of course, tutors should be writers themselves also.) He claims that ninety-nine percent of what people know about language cannot be enunciated because it's only tacit knowledge. Teachers, he says (and tutors, it could also be said) must translate their tacit knowledge about language into focal knowledge in order to help students in the process of learning to write. At the conference he went on to explain that all language is governed by rules, as is chess:

Whereas you learn the rules for chess overtly, you learn the rules for language by intake. You acquire them rather than learn them. . . . If a kid has not acquired mechanics, punctuation, or grammar skills by age fifteen, he'll have to learn them consciously. What you need is some sort of system [whereby] you can send kids to the lab to consciously learn those skills.
Any kid who can figure out how to register at U.S.C. can learn how to edit; editing is a fairly low-level skill. . . . The catch is it's a conscious skill, and you have to think about it to apply it.

This back-to-basics deal: it simply runs counter to what we know about how people learn language skills, and the more we get back to basics, drilling people on mechanics in the classroom, the more we create this screen which is going to keep them from getting their semantic intentions out on paper. . . . But the beauty is [that] all this saves us a great deal of time, gets rid of the odium of marking papers. [He then further asserted that] all of these comments in the margin are counterproductive. [His printed hand-out also emphasized this idea in the following:] both common sense and research indicate that red squiggles in the margins of papers are largely a waste of time--the kinds of red squiggles that indicate mechanical errors, that is. Students who need to can learn the skills of editing systematically in the writing laboratory. 4

Winterowd admitted that he was not against all paper marking. He even stated that sometimes "teachers should really work those papers over in red or green ink. . . because kids do need those editing skills. But there's no need in the world to do meticulous reading of every paper." Laughingly he continued, "Being cynical, you can use the rotten egg formula; you know you don't need to eat the whole egg to tell that it's rotten." Winterowd's recommendation for responding to papers—-the single-comment reaction, conference, 

and peer discussion—as it continues to gain popularity with writing teachers, will surely also mean that increasing numbers of students will go to learning laboratories to "consciously learn" those lower-level, basic writing skills which they failed to "acquire" while growing up.
What, then, does all this mean in relation to the English tutors who work in the learning laboratories? It means that they need more than just a tacit knowledge about language and about writing. For one thing, a tutor needs to know about prose, the kind of writing expected of college students, and how it differs from ordinary or conversational speech and from verse. Northrop Frye discusses these differences in his book *The Well-Tempered Critic*. Refuting an assumption of long-standing, Frye insists that prose "is not ordinary speech, but ordinary speech on its best behavior, in its Sunday clothes, aware of an audience prepared beforehand."^5 He has this to say about ordinary speech:

If we listen to children talking, we do not hear prose: we hear a heavily accented speech rhythm with a great deal of chanting in it, or whining, depending on the mood of the child... The teenager issuing mating calls over a telephone is not speaking prose. ... The lady screaming amiabilities at a crowded cocktail party is not [speaking prose].^6

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6 Frye, p. 19.
Ordinary speech is concerned mainly with putting into words what is loosely called the stream of consciousness: the daydreaming, remembering, worrying, associating, brooding, and mooning that continually flows through the mind and which . . . we often speak of as thought.  

One can see in ordinary speech . . . a unit of rhythm peculiar to it, a short phrase that contains the central word or idea aimed at, but is largely innocent of syntax. It is much more repetitive than prose, as it is the process of working out an idea, and the repetitions are largely rhythmical filler. . . . In pursuit of its main theme it follows the paths of private association, which gives it a somewhat meandering course. Because of the prominence of private association in it, I . . . call the rhythm of ordinary speech the associative rhythm.

Verse, on the other hand, Frye maintains, has a different kind of rhythm, one that has a regularly recurring accent as well as some other common conventions such as rhyme, alliteration, or assonance. The heroic couplet (a pair of rhymed lines in iambic pentameter), he says, is probably the clearest example of strict verse in English. In the verse of Pope, for instance, Frye reports:

We hear at once the full ring of the rhyming couplet, and we know immediately what kind of thing to expect. There is a sense of constantly fulfilled expectation [but] a sense which is the opposite of obviousness.

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7 Frye, p. 20.
8 Frye, p. 21.
We do not know what Pope is going to say, but we know the units within which he is going to say it. . . . When the rhyme disappears, as it does in blank verse, we take a step nearer to prose, and we find ourselves listening to a syncopated mixture of iambic pentameter and a prose semantic rhythm. The fight of these two rhythms against each other makes up much of the complexity of great blank-verse writing.9

Frye sums up his ideas about these general aspects of language in the following:

There are, then, three primary rhythms of verbal expression. First, there is the rhythm of prose, of which the unit is the sentence. Second, there is an associative rhythm, found in ordinary speech and various places in literature in which the unit is a short phrase of irregular length and primitive syntax [such as has been traditionally used to show insanity or mental confusion, as evidenced in some of the speeches in King Lear]. Third, there is the rhythm of [verse,] a regularly repeated pattern of accent or meter, often accompanied by other recurring features, like rhyme or alliteration. . . . All three rhythms are involved in all writing, but one is normally the dominating or organizing rhythm.10

The dominating and organizing rhythm which college students and English tutors are most concerned with is prose, which Frye claims is based on the sentence, a form both logical and communicable. Since the standard English of schoolroom writing is prose, Frye argues that it can be analyzed grammatically. In fact,


10Frye, pp. 24-5.
he insists that "standard English cannot be learned without the study of formal grammar."\footnote{Frye, pp. 29-33.} Such study is what Winterowd claims must be done consciously if the students have not acquired or assimilated the grammar through extensive reading. Where in colleges today, then, may remedial students go to consciously learn the basic skills? Obviously the answer is to the learning laboratories. And who there will teach those basic skills? Here, the answer must be well-trained tutors who can themselves articulate the rules for writing good prose.

It is true that students beginning their college careers can indeed expect a good deal of writing ahead of them. The most important part of that writing will be the ideas that are presented. In order for tutors, then, to help students to present their ideas in an organized and well-developed way, they should understand grammar, punctuation and mechanics, spelling, and how to compose effective sentences and paragraphs. The remainder of this paper will address precisely these basic rules of writing.\footnote{Writing handbooks used as sources for the following material are currently accepted and used authorities. See Bibliography (p. 103).}

The material from pages 15 to 101 is the author's contribution to a manual for tutors being prepared by Dr. D. Irwin, L. Sherman, J. Russell, and A.J.U. Glazier from the Learning Center, CSCSB, scheduled to be published Fall, 1981.
Chapter 5
Grammar

It is evident to thinking people that all languages have systems, or grammars, which are rule governed. Even though the systems are extraordinarily complex and subtle, children at very young ages unconsciously begin to observe and assimilate them, until, within a matter of a few years, they have them mastered as far as speech is concerned. But since it takes longer to assimilate and master the system for the written language, many students arrive at college with a lack of confidence about these grammatical matters that govern our language. Therefore, it is a good idea for writing tutors to review the different elements of grammar in order to help students when they have problems, specifically in the areas of run-on sentences, fragments, misused pronoun case forms, and faulty shifts in construction.

Run-on Sentences

There are two kinds of run-on sentence problems that frequently show up in student writing. One is the comma splice, which results from connecting two independent clauses with only a comma.

WRONG The apples are too green, they will give you a stomach ache. [comma splice]
The other is the fused sentence which results from connecting two independent clauses with no punctuation at all between them.

**WRONG** The apples are too green they will give you a stomach ache. [fused sentence]

The fused sentence error occurs most often when the second independent clause begins with a word such as this, that, another, there, it, or some other pronoun. These types of words sometimes cause the writer to believe he is continuing the same sentence instead of starting a new one (which he actually should be doing).

**WRONG** The apples are too green that is why I won't eat one. [fused sentence]

These run-on sentence problems can be corrected in four different ways: (1) by subordinating one of the clauses (often the best solution), (2) by making two separate sentences, (3) by joining the two clauses with a semicolon, and (4) by joining the clauses with a comma plus a coordinating conjunction (**and**, **but**, **or**, **for**, **nor**, and sometimes **so** and **yet**), as seen below:

(1) Because the apples are too green, they will give you a stomach ache.

(2) The apples are too green. They will give you a stomach ache.
(3) The apples are too green; they will give you a stomach ache.
(4) The apples are too green, so they give you a stomach ache.

Fragments

Sentence fragments (phrases or subordinate clauses which are written with the capitalization and punctuation befitting bona fide sentences) are also common problems in weak student writing. The reason for this is that these partial sentences are used extensively in everyday conversation and in the copy of newspaper and magazine advertising. While sentence fragments can be very effective in fiction, poetry, and dialogue, they should rarely be used in college expository writing. The most common fragment errors are (1) groups of words beginning with subordinating connectives such as because, unless, until, before, after, since, even, though, although, who, when, where, and so; (2) phrases giving additional information, beginning with for example, except, including, especially, such as, and also; (3) participial (-ing) phrases and infinitive (to...) phrases; (4) words without a subject; and (5) words without a verb—as illustrated here:

(1) After the parade from Main Street to the stadium began. [subordinate clause]
(2) For example, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, or any other fresh vegetable. [phrase giving additional information]

(3) Not knowing that he was the president of the college. [participial phrase]

(4) And, of course, would have died before telling the secret. [no subject]

(5) What the math professor had in mind at the beginning of the semester. [no verb]

Often the best way to correct the problem of sentence fragments is to include the fragmentary material in with an adjacent sentence where it seems to belong anyway. In some cases the subordinating connective word (because, unless, etc.) can simply be removed, and in other cases the missing subject or verb phrase can be added.

Pronoun Case Forms

Students who don't understand about pronoun case forms have a very difficult time knowing such things as when to use I and when to use me. Pronouns take three different forms—subjective (or nominative), objective, and possessive (or genetive)—according to their function in the sentence. Subjective case pronouns, which are used as subjects or subjective complements, are I, we, he, she, they, and who.

My dad and I are going to the store. [subject of sentence]
It was they who protested. [subjective complement]

Objective case pronouns, which function as direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions, are me, us, him, her, them, and whom.

The rain hit my brother and me when we stepped outside. [object of sentence]

He gave Marsha and me white roses. [indirect object]

The bicycles were for him and me. [objects of preposition]

The possessive case pronouns, which show ownership, are my, our, his, her, their, and whose when used before a noun or a gerund (a present participle, or -ing word, which functions as a noun).

- My bedroom has blue wallpaper. [before a noun]
- Her crying upset John. [before a gerund]

Possessive case pronouns take a slightly different form when they themselves are used as the subject or subjective complement, that is, when they do not modify nouns as the examples immediately preceding do. The forms, in this case, are mine, ours, his, hers, theirs, and whose.

- Mine is always lost when I need it. [subject of sentence]
The new station wagon is theirs.  [subjective complement]

Faulty Shifts in Construction

Inconsistencies caused by faulty shifts in grammatical construction are often responsible for ambiguity and confusion in student writing. Problems arise when the student begins a sentence (or a larger passage of two or three sentences) using a particular number, person, tense, voice, and mood and then suddenly makes an illogical shift to a different number, person, tense, voice, or mood.

Shifts in number are common problems in students' writing. The rules are that (1) a verb must agree in number with its subject and (2) a pronoun must agree in number with its antecedent. It is a simple matter in sentences like the following:

This apple is delicious.  [subject-verb agreement]

The children make their own lunches.  [pronoun-antecedent agreement]

Confusion arises, though, when students don't recognize the real subject of a sentence.

A series of articles was published.  [Articles is sometimes mistaken for the subject.]

It must be remembered that a singular subject remains singular in spite of the addition of expressions
beginning with such words as besides, like, with, together with, accompanied by, along with, as well as, in addition to, including, and no less than.

Frustration, as well as boredom, causes some people to snack and gain weight. [Subject remains singular.]

Mary, together with Joan and Phyllis, comes early for class. [Subject remains singular.]

Collective nouns need special consideration, though. Those that refer to groups take single verbs, but those that focus on the individual members of a group take plural verbs.

The family is the basic unit of our society. [Family is seen as a unit.]

The family have completed their various projects. [The individuals are regarded separately.]

The number is considered to be singular; whereas, a number is considered to be plural.

The number of geese in the pond was small.
A number of workers were home with the flu.

Subjects which are joined by and are usually plural.

A paper and a pencil are essential tools for school.

There are exceptions, however. A compound subject
referring to a single person is followed by a singular verb.

Our president and leader was dead at fifty-nine.

Also, the words each and every (when preceding singular subjects which are joined by and) call for singular verbs.

Each teacher and student is to fill out the questionnaire.

Every cow and pig has been removed from the barnyard.

Generally, the word each used after a plural subject does not affect the verb form.

They each have paid their debts to society.

The following words regularly take singular verbs when they are used as subjects: either, neither, another, anyone, anybody, anything, someone, somebody, something, one, everyone, everybody, everything, no one, nobody, and nothing.

Neither of my sons likes walnuts.

The rule is not so firm, though, with words such as none, any, all, more, most, and some; they may take singular or plural verbs, depending upon the context of the sentence.
None is so guilty as he who thinks he is without fault.

None are so guilty as they who think they are without fault.

Some of the milk was sour.
Some of the cookies were crumbled.

A typical error in pronoun-antecedent agreement occurs when a writer shifts to a plural pronoun after starting with a singular noun (or antecedent), as in the following sentence:

I think the American adolescent is spoiled because they get everything they want. [faulty shift]

I think American adolescents are spoiled because they get everything they want. [consistent]

English grammar includes three persons: (1) first person, the person speaking (I, we, me, us); (2) second person, the person spoken to (you); and (3) third person, the person or thing spoken of (he, she, it, they, them), as well as all nouns and all indefinite nouns such as someone, anybody, everybody). Much of the problem in faulty number shifts comes from the fact that the indefinite second person, you, can refer to people in general. The error occurs when a writer begins a sentence or passage with a third person noun and then shifts illogically to the
College basketball players practice every single day because they realize you get out of shape if you don't.

[Faulty shift]

College basketball players practice every single day because they realize they get out of shape if they don't.

[consistent]

The English language has five distinct tenses which indicate different time elements named by the verb or verb phrase. Present tense is formed by adding an _s_ to third person singular words and by leaving first and second person forms as they are. Use of this form means that something is universally true, not limited to a particular time (for instance, she talks, we talk). Past tense is formed by adding -ed unless the verb is shown to be irregular by its internal vowel changes such as sing, sang, sung. This form indicates that the action was completed at a previous time (for instance, she talked; they talked). Progressive tense uses a form of the verb be (such as is, am, were, etc.) plus the present participle, the -ing form, of the verb, meaning a continuing but limited action (for instance, she is talking; we are talking). Perfect tense uses a form of have plus the past participle, or -ed form, of the verb. This form refers to an action begun earlier that is still
relevant at a later time (for instance, she has talked; we have talked). Future tense uses will or shall plus the infinitive to indicate future time or prediction (for instance, she will talk; we will talk).

Several compound tenses may be formed by combining the progressive and the perfect tenses with each other and with the present, past, and future tenses.

He had talked. [past perfect]
He had been talking. [past perfect progressive]
He will be talking. [future progressive]

English has three different moods, which express the attitude of the speaker or the writer toward the statement. They are the indicative, the imperative, and the subjunctive. The indicative mood means the sentence is an ordinary declarative statement or question, formed by using any of the above verb tenses.

He is hungry. [declarative mood]
Is he hungry? [declarative mood]

The imperative mood is used in a command or a request and is formed by using the infinitive form of the verb, with the subject you understood.

Come quickly. [imperative mood]
The subjunctive mood means that the statement is in some way contrary to fact, doubtful, or hypothetical. This mood is formed by using the infinitive form of the verb or by using the plural past tense of the verb.

It is important that he be on time. [subjunctive mood, using the infinitive]

If he were the only one here, it would be different. [subjunctive mood, using the plural past tense]
Chapter 6
Punctuation and Mechanics

College students will acquire greater control over their written language if they develop a sound understanding of the conventions of punctuation and mechanics. In order to help them become more effective writers, then, English tutors themselves need to know those rules governing the use of such things as end punctuation, the comma, the semicolon, quotation marks, other less frequently used marks, and general mechanics. Insignificant though these small details may seem, attention to correct usage in this area will give student writing an air of authority and confidence that will help prevent misunderstanding on the reader's part as well as promote more effective writing in general.

End Punctuation

Most students don't have too much trouble with end punctuation because there are only three kinds: the period, the question mark, and the exclamation point. Every sentence or deliberate sentence fragment (such as Better late than never.) should end with one of these three kinds of punctuation and not go trailing off with a dash. The only exception (that is, when a complete sentence does not end with one of these) is when a sentence is used as a title which is
at the top of the page or otherwise set off from the text.

USED AS A TITLE
Raising Children is Not an Easy Task [a complete sentence but not followed by a period]

The period is used at the end of all declarative sentences, indirect questions, and courtesy questions (even though these last ones have the word order of a question).

DECLARATIVE SENTENCE
All puppies like to romp and play.

INDIRECT QUESTION
She asked when the classes would begin.

COURTESY QUESTION
Would you kindly refund my deposit as per our agreement.

Question marks are used at the end of all direct questions, as well as at the end of declarative or imperative sentences which have been converted to questions.

Did it rain last night? [direct question]

He took the class last year? [declarative sentence converted to a question]

Mix the sugar in next? [imperative sentence converted to a question]

When a declarative statement ends with a quotation which asks a question, the question mark goes inside
the quotation marks; no additional period is used even though the whole thing is a statement rather than a question.

The principal asked, "Has this student been absent all week?"

Exclamation points (or marks) are used at the ends of emphatic statements, emotional exclamations, commands, and some deliberate fragments.

I will never, never stop fighting this injustice! [emphatic statement]

Help! [emotional exclamation]

Stop hitting that helpless animal! [command]

How beautiful! [deliberate fragment]

Because exclamation points are the most dramatic marks of end punctuation and because they convey such strong feelings of excitement, they should be used sparingly; in fact, they will make the writer appear somewhat hysterical if used too frequently. For this reason also, one should never use two exclamation points together; one is sufficient. Likewise, exclamation points should not be used with question marks because this would tend to weaken the emphasis and cause ambiguity. Writers should also be aware that too frequent use of exclamation points will eventually "water down" their force (like the little boy's crying
LESS EMPHATIC  You must be joking?!!
MORE EMPHATIC  You must be joking!

The Comma

The comma is by far the most commonly used type of internal punctuation, and it is also the one that causes students the most problems. It is a highly essential mark for the purpose of achieving clarity, as evidenced in the different meanings conveyed by the following two sentences:

When the lightning struck, Bill James fainted.

When the lightning struck Bill, James fainted.

Structurally, the comma functions as a separator, going (1) before coordinating conjunctions which connect two independent clauses, (2) between items in a series, (3) after introductory elements, (4) around parenthetical elements, (5) around nonrestrictive modifiers, (6) before direct quotation, (7) between geographic units and parts of dates, (8) between names and titles or names and degrees, (9) between units of thousands, (10) after greetings and closings of letters, and (11) in other places for the sake of clarity.

A comma should be used before a coordinating
conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet) which separates two main clauses, as in the following sentence:

> No courses in Russian are being offered at the college this year, and no effort is being made to offer any next year.

However, the comma is often omitted if the main clauses are short.

> Times were tough and money was scarce.

When commas are used to separate a series of three or more items, the items may consist of single words (all of the same parts of speech), phrases, or even short independent clauses.

> The salad contained lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, and mushrooms. [between single words]

> John Smith was born in England, educated in France, and married in the United States. [between phrases]

> Dad did all the yard work, Mom kept the house clean, and Aunt Martha cooked most of the meals. [between short main clauses]

While some writers choose to omit the comma before the conjunction and the final item in a series, it is safest to use one because its omission may lead to ambiguity.

> AMBIGUOUS The only people interested in the subject were children, old men and women.
The only people interested in the subject were children, old men, and women. The introductory phrase is short and no pause is intended. Here again, many times the comma is omitted if the introductory phrase is short and no pause is intended.

A few minutes later, the old man arrived. Even though he never missed a day off work, he often arrived a few minutes late.

Ingamar Omsen is a brilliant, sensitive, prolific writer. His adjectives could be rearranged.

Old brown wooden benches lined the courtyard. "Adjectives sound best in this order.

The introductory elements of a sentence which should be followed by a comma may include single words, phrases, and subordinate clauses, as seen here:

INTRODUCTORY Fortunately, the labor dispute did not last long.

INTRODUCTORY Before the coming of the white man, the natives lived in peace and harmony.

INTRODUCTORY Even though he never missed a day of work, he often arrived a few minutes late.

INTRODUCTORY Even though he never missed a day of work, he often arrived a few minutes late.

INTRODUCTORY Before the coming of the white man, the natives lived in peace and harmony.

INTRODUCTORY Fortunately, the labor dispute did not last long.

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INTRODUCTORY Fortunately, the labor dispute did not last long.
After supper he smoked his pipe.  
[comma not necessary]

At seventy she was still beautiful.  
[comma not necessary]

However, if even a very short introductory phrase includes a present participle, an infinitive, or if it ends with a preposition, a comma should be used in order to prevent misreading.

Before leaving, the teacher locked the classroom.  [present participle]

Because he refused to play, the game was soon forgotten.  [infinitive]

To sum up, the situation was a disaster.  [preposition]

Parenthetical elements—words or phrases which interrupt a sentence and are not part of its main structure—should be set off by commas. These include adverbs or adverbial phrases, direct address, and tag questions.

The best part, of course, was the ending.  [adverbial phrase]

Tell me, Johnny, about your school party.  [direct address]

It's a fact, isn't it, that humans live longer than dogs?  [tag question]

Nonrestrictive modifiers, that is, those words, phrases and clauses not essential to the meaning of
the sentence, are considered to be parenthetical and should be separated by commas from the rest of the sentence. However, restrictive modifiers, those modifiers which are essential to the meaning of the sentence, should not be separated from the rest of the sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NONRESTRICTIVE MODIFIERS</th>
<th>Mary's husband, John, is president of Security Bank. [The sentence makes sense without the modifier.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(require commas)</td>
<td>Governor Smith, who was elected by a landslide, has two more years to serve. [This modifying clause is not essential to the meaning.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESTRICTIVE MODIFIERS</td>
<td>The Scandinavian playwright Henrik Ibsen wrote &quot;The Doll House.&quot; [The meaning would be changed if Henrik Ibsen were left out.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(should not have commas)</td>
<td>All students who fail to report on Monday will be dropped from the class. [This modifier is essential to the sentence's meaning.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commas should be used in sentences to separate direct quotations from the phrases which identify the speakers. But they should not be used if the word that precedes the direct quotation.

Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" [comma required]

Harry Emerson Fosdick said that "liberty is always dangerous, but it is the safest thing we have." [no comma used]
Most geographic units should be separated by commas. However, commas should not be used between the name of the state and the zip code.

The population of St. John's, Newfoundland, is much larger than that of St. Johns, Arizona. [commas between geographic units]

Her address is 350 Gault Avenue, Canoga Park, California 91364. [no comma before zip code]

In dates which have a month-day-year order, commas should be used to separate the day from the year. And, if the date appears in the middle of the sentence, another comma should be used after the year. However, if the reverse order is used (day-month-year), commas should not be used. In those cases where only the month and year are used, the comma is optional.

Maria was born on April 17, 1940, in a little town in upstate Wisconsin. [commas used]

The last convention was on 14 July 1980. [no commas]

We visited New England last in July 1976. [comma optional]

We visited New England last in July, 1976. [comma optional]

Commas should be used to separate names from titles and degrees that follow the name.

Victoria, queen of England
Robert L. Smith, M. D.
Jerry Brown, governor of California
Max Olsen, Jr.

Commas should not be used, though, where the title precedes the name. Also, commas should not be used before a Roman numeral or an ordinal number that is used to differentiate persons with the same names.

Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II
Dr. Robert L. Smith
Governor Jerry Brown
Max Olsen III
Henry the Fourteenth

In writing numbers over one thousand, commas are used to separate digits by thousands by starting from the right side and placing a comma between every three numberals. Commas should not be used, though, to separate numbers within zip codes, identification numbers, telephone numbers, street addresses, numbers used in years, or numbers that follow a decimal point.

3,426,195 13207 Main Street
Provo, Utah 84601 2500 B. C.
Telephone: 632-4901 π = 3.14159
Serial number: 67492153
In letters a comma is always used after the complimentary closing, and it is used after the salutation if the letter is an informal one. (In more formal letters, a colon is often used after the salutation.)

Yours truly, Dear Mr. Smith,
Love, Dear Ms. Abernathy:
Dear Joan, Dear Sir:

The Semicolon

A semicolon is used between two main clauses which are not joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet) and between a series of coordinate word groups which already contain commas. It should be remembered that the semicolon is used only between elements of equal rank, which means that it cannot be used to join an independent clause with a phrase or with a list of items. The semicolon is like a weak period and, as such, can be used to join closely related sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLOSELY</th>
<th>RELATED</th>
<th>SENTENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The men hunted and fished;</td>
<td>the women took care of the gardens.</td>
<td>I cannot see you on Thursday; I will be out of town.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members of the panel will be Fred Nye, a high school principal; Martha Wright, a junior high school counselor; Robert Jones, a history teacher; and Kip Williams, an eleventh-grade student.

 Conjunctive adverbs, which are not grammatically equivalent to coordinating conjunctions, are very often used after a semicolon between two main clauses.

 The instructor assigned a ten-page paper for Monday; therefore, I will not be vacationing this weekend.

 The new regulation permits up to three absences; however, Professor Smith strongly discourages any unnecessary ones.

 The following is a list of conjunctive adverbs (and transitional phrases used as conjunctive adverbs) which can be used after a semicolon that separates two main clauses:

 accordingly henceforth nonetheless
 also however on the contrary
 anyhow in addition on the other hand
 as a result indeed otherwise
 at the same time in fact still
 besides in other words that is
 consequently instead then
 for example likewise therefore
 for instance meanwhile thus
 furthermore moreover
Quotation Marks

Quotation marks should be used around direct quotations, around some titles, and around words used in a special sense. They are always used in pairs (one at the beginning and one at the end) and serve as visual cues that isolate the enclosed group of words from all the other words in the text. In quoting the words of a speaker or writer, it should be remembered that quotation marks are used only around direct quotations, not around indirect quotations.

DIRECT QUOTATION
Mary said, "I have to be home by seven o'clock."

INDIRECT QUOTATION
Mary said that she had to be home by seven o'clock. [no quotation marks]

Quoted material more than four lines long is usually set off from the rest of the text by indenting and using single spaces (unless the copy is being prepared for publication, in which case the indented quotation, too, should be double-spaced). Quotation marks are not used around such indented material. When quotation marks are needed within a direct quotation, the internal quotation is enclosed in single quotation marks (like apostrophes); as in the following:

Dr. Anderson distinctly said, "Read Ernest Hemingway's short story 'Hills Like White Elephants' by tomorrow."
Students sometimes have problems using quotation marks along with other marks of punctuation. The rules to remember are that (1) periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks, (2) colons and semicolons always go outside the quotation marks, and (3) exclamation points, question marks, and dashes go inside the quotation marks when they apply only to the quoted matter, and they go outside the quotation marks when they apply to the whole sentence, as in the examples below:

(1) "Bill," he suggested, "let's go for a swim." [commas and periods inside quotation marks]

(2) He spoke of Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener"; yet I was familiar only with his Moby Dick. [semicolon outside quotation marks]

(3) Father asked, "What is the matter?" [The question mark applies only to the quoted matter.]

What is the meaning of the term "Hawthorne effect"? [The question mark applies to the whole sentence.]

Why did he ask, "What is the matter?" [Both the quoted matter and the sentence as a whole are questions, but another question mark does not follow the quotation marks.]

The crowd shouted, "We want Jimmy!" [The exclamation point applies only to the quoted matter.]

Stop whistling "You Are My Sunshine"! [The exclamation point applies to the whole sentence.]
Quotation marks are used to enclose the titles of minor (shorter) works of art such as short stories, essays, short poems (those poems not divided into numbered parts, books, or cantos), one-act plays, songs, articles from periodicals, and chapters or other subdivisions of books.

Gary Tate's book Teaching Composition contains numerous essays on the teaching of writing, including "Basic Writing" and "Rhetorical Analysis of Writing."


Titles of longer works such as books, periodicals, and newspapers are underlined in typing and longhand and italicized in print. Titles should never be both underlined and enclosed in quotation marks. Also, quotation marks should never be used to enclose a title when it is being used as a heading (at the beginning of a short story or essay); however, if a quoted unit is included in the title, that unit should be enclosed in quotation marks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE AS</th>
<th>HEADING</th>
<th>How I Lost One Hundred Pounds in Nine Months [no quotation marks]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE AS</td>
<td>HEADING</td>
<td>A Stylistic Analysis of &quot;Hills Like White Elephants&quot; [quotation marks for part of title]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quotation marks are sometimes used to enclose words used in a special or ironical sense as well as words used as words and not for their own meanings.

John's "prophecy" was merely a lucky guess. [word used in ironical sense]

The director's proposal contained too many "if's." [word used as a word]

Other Marks

Other valuable marks of punctuation—marks which are seldom used correctly by remedial writers—are the colon, the dash, parentheses, and brackets.

The colon is a strong mark of punctuation which is used after a formal introductory statement for the purpose of directing attention to what follows. It may direct attention to a formal list, to a quotation, or to an appositive or brief summary at the end of a sentence. It should be remembered that a complete sentence (that is, an independent clause) should always precede the colon.

There are many ways of cooking meat: roasting, broiling, braising, and pan frying. [a formal list]

Much of the Bible is written in lofty prose: "and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." [a quotation]

While in captivity, their thoughts were on one single objective: freedom. [an appositive or summary]
A colon is also used after the salutation of a business letter, between a title and a subtitle, between numbers referring to a chapter and verse of the Bible, and between numbers indicating the hour and minute of a time reference.

Dear Mr. Walters: [after a salutation]

Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographical Essays [between title and subtitle]

Matthew 5:41 [between chapter and verse in Bible]

10:45 p.m. [between hour and minute of a time reference]

As a mark of punctuation, the dash is somewhat like a comma, but it is used to indicate a more sudden break in thought, to set off a parenthetical element (especially when the parenthetical element is to be emphasized or when the parenthetical element has commas within it). It is also used to set off a brief summary or an appositive (or a series of appositives).

The children were asked--actually, they were commanded--to finish their work before leaving. [sudden break in thought]

He wrote that poem--he was ill, newly divorced, and homesick at the time--when his morale was at its lowest point. [parenthetical element with commas]

Health, freedom, and the opportunity to work--these were their goals. [summary]

She just sat there--small, silent, afraid--staring at the floor. [series of appositives]
The dash is indicated on the typewriter by two hyphens (with no spaces before, between, or after them). In longhand the dash is an unbroken line about the length of two hyphens.

Parentheses are used, like commas and dashes, to enclose non-essential elements. Parentheses, though, usually set off material even less essential and less relevant than the material set off by commas. They are more formal than dashes, and they tend to deemphasize and minimize the importance of the enclosed material. (Dashes, on the other hand, like arrows, attract the attention of the reader and tend to emphasize the material set off by them.) Parentheses are also used to enclose numbers and letters that are used for enumeration within a sentence.

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was one of America's best-loved poets.

In 1973 Ronald Reagan (later to become our fortieth president) was serving as governor of California.

Her main concerns were (1) getting the classes she wanted, (2) finding a place to live, and (3) making her money last until payday.

The cakes will be judged on (a) appearance, (b) texture, and (c) flavor.

Unlike commas and dashes, parentheses always occur in pairs. If the material within the parentheses forms a complete sentence and is not inside another sentence,
the first word should be capitalized and some kind of final punctuation (a period, question mark, or exclamation point) should be used before the closing parenthesis.

They continued their exploration of the Amazon. (Later they would learn that war had started.)

If the material and parentheses are inside another sentence, the first word is not capitalized, and there is no final punctuation inside the parentheses.

A decagon (the word is ultimately Greek in origin) is a term used in geometry for a plane figure having ten sides and ten angles.

A space is left outside the parentheses unless it comes at the end of the sentence, in which case the end punctuation immediately follows the last parenthesis. No spaces are used immediately inside the parentheses.

Square brackets, which are seldom used marks, should not be confused with parentheses. Their use is highly restricted; they should be used only to enclose editorial corrections or comments in quoted matter and, where necessary, to serve as parentheses within parentheses. The two most common reasons for inserting editorial comments into a quotation are (1) to indicate that there is an error in the original
passage and (2) to fill in certain information so that the quotation will not be unclear or misleading to the reader. The usual way of indicating that an error exists in the original is to insert the Latin word *sic*, bracketed, (meaning *thus*, i.e., "The original is written thus.") directly after the error. The word *sic* used for this purpose is not only bracketed, but is also underlined (or italicized in print).

John Smith stated, "This is the first time he [Bill Simpson] ever paid attention to the employees' needs." [filling in certain information]

In her last letter she wrote, "I decided to try for the scholarwhip [*sic*] because Professor Gates encouraged me to." [indicating an error in the original]


**Mechanics**

College students should realize that the final version of a paper which is to be submitted should be in acceptable manuscript form and should be carefully proofread. By complying with established manuscript conventions, students will be able to turn in neat, professional-looking papers which will make favorable impressions on their readers. The following guidelines will be helpful in producing those kinds of papers.
To begin with, sufficient margins (about an inch and a half at the top and the left side, and an inch at the right side and bottom) will help prevent a crowded appearance. The first sentence of each paragraph should be indented uniformly, about an inch in handwritten copy and five spaces in typewritten copy. Pages (all except the first one) should be numbered with Arabic numerals (without parentheses or periods) in the upper right-hand corner. The title should be centered about an inch and a half down (or on the first ruled line, if handwritten) on the first page. The first and last words of the title should be capitalized along with all other words except articles, short conjunctions, and short prepositions. The title should not be underlined nor put in quotation marks (excepting that part of the title which might be a quotation or title of a book), and it should not be followed by a period even though it may be a complete sentence.

Within the body of the paper, a line should never begin with a comma, a colon, a semicolon, or any terminal mark of punctuation (that is, a period, a question mark or an exclamation point), and a line should never end with the first of a set of quotation marks, parentheses, or brackets.

The necessity to occasionally divide words at the ends of lines causes problems for many students.
They should be aware that if the right-hand margin is reasonably wide, there will not need to be very many divided words, especially if they understand that it is easier for the reader to have an uneven margin than to have to figure out a large number of broken words. The following are useful guidelines to go by when word divisions are necessary: (1) do not divide one-syllable words such as twelfth, thought, or seemed; (2) use a hyphen to mark the separation between syllables; (3) do not put a single letter of a word at the end or at the beginning of a line (jerk-y, a-bout); (4) do not put -ed or any other two-letter ending at the beginning of a line; (5) divide hyphenated words only at the hyphen; (6) divide words between two consonants that come between vowels (prac-ticed, pic-nic), except when the division does not reflect pronunciation, as in bet-ween or thin-ker. When in doubt about where to divide a word, it is a good idea to check a dictionary for correct syllabification.

Typewritten papers should be double-spaced. Lengthy quotations, however, should be single-spaced and indented to set them off from the rest of the text. Notes that occur at the bottom of the page should also be single-spaced and separated by a double space if there are more than one. (Many writers prefer to group footnotes together and label them as Notes or
Endnotes on a separate page that follows the text. Handwritten papers should be single-spaced unless the paper has very narrow lines; however, the very narrow lined paper should be avoided if at all possible. Finally, papers should be typed or written on one side only.

Other aspects of mechanics to be considered are underlining, abbreviations, numerals, contractions, and elipses. Underlining in handwritten or typewritten papers is equivalent to the italics used by printers. Those things which should be underlined include book-length literary words, newspapers, magazines, works of art, musical compositions, and names of ships and aircraft.

Dickens' **David Copperfield** [book]
Shakespeare's **Hamlet** [play]
Milton's **Paradise Lost** [book-length poem]
the Los Angeles **Times** [newspaper]
the **Atlantic Monthly** [magazine]
Handel's **The Messiah** [musical composition]
Leonardo da Vinci's **Mona Lisa** [painting]
**The Queen Mary** [ship]
**The Spirit of St. Louis** [aircraft]

Foreign words and phrases that have not been fully anglicized should also be underlined, as should
regular English words and phrases that the writer wants to emphasize heavily.

The merchant, operating under the principle of caveat emptor, would not replace the faulty wiring. [foreign words]

I sent the letter precisely because I didn't want a misunderstanding to develop. [heavy emphasis]

Rules for the use of abbreviations and numbers (figures) vary for different types of writing. They may be suitable for technical writing and informal writing, but only certain ones are appropriate for ordinary expository and semi-formal writing. Common abbreviations in ordinary writing include Mr., Messrs. (plural for Mr.), Mrs., Mmes. (plural for Mrs.), Dr., and St. (for Saint). The words doctor and saint, though, should be spelled out when not followed by a proper name.

Messrs. Richard Jones and Horace Fox
Mmes. Richard Jones and Horace Fox
Mmes. Barbara Jones and Shirley Fox
Dr. John Shumway
St. Francis

The doctor was out of town. [spelled out when not used as a title]

The saint was praised for his service to others. [spelled out when not used as a title]
Such abbreviations as Gen., Prof., Sen., and Capt. may be used before full names or before initials and last names, but not before last names alone.

Sen. S. I. Hayakawa [abbreviated before full name]

Senator Hayakawa [spelled out before last name only]

In ordinary expository writing, names of states, countries, days of the week, months, and units of measurements should be spelled out rather than abbreviated. Other words that are used as essential parts of proper names, such as Street, Avenue, Road, River, and Company, should also be spelled out. First names should also be spelled out, as opposed to Jos., Geo., etc.

A contraction is a special sort of abbreviation in which two words are written as one. While they are very common in everyday speech, contractions should be reserved for personal experience papers and avoided in such formal writing as research papers. The most common English contractions are those consisting of verbs followed by the word not, such as in aren't, can't, mustn't, etc. In these contractions, the verb is never abbreviated; it is always the word not which is abbreviated.

Another common type of contraction consists of
a pronoun plus an auxiliary verb. In these cases, the auxiliary verbs are abbreviated, but the pronoun never is.

**PRONOUNS:** I you he they

**VERBS**

be I'm you're he's they're
has/have I've you've he's they've
had I'd you'd he'd they'd
will I'll you'll he'll they'll
would I'd you'd he'd they'd

Noun subjects may also form contractions with the verbs is and has.

Tom's coming back next Monday. [noun plus is]

My dog's got a new leash. [noun plus has]

The conventions for handling numbers—that is, spelling them out or using figures, or numerals—vary from one kind of writing to another. Usually more figures are used in technical writing. The important thing is that numbers be handled consistently within a given paper. Some useful guidelines are that (1) numbers requiring no more than two words should be spelled out, while figures should be used for numbers requiring more than two words; (2) if a sentence
contains a series of numbers, figures should be used for all of them; (3) figures should be used in dates, addresses, and time notations when accompanied by a.m. or p.m.; (4) figures should be used in writing measurements, page numbers, and amounts of money when used with dollar signs; (5) figures should be used when decimals and complicated fractions are involved; (6) figures should be used for code numbers, flight numbers, and telephone numbers; (7) a sentence should not begin with figures; (8) to prevent misreading when two different numbers are used consecutively, the first one may be spelled out, followed by figures for the second; (9) figures should always be used for the year except for very formal social announcements or invitations; and (10) except in legal or commercial writing, it is not considered good style to use figures in parentheses after a spelled-out number.

(1) There are four thousand students at the college, but only twenty-two are taking creative writing. [spelled-out when number can be expressed in two words]

(2) The points earned for his first six projects were 8, 3.5, 103, 7.4, 50, and 106. [figures for series of numbers]

(3) I arrived at 376 Ash Street, Apartment 4B at 10:08 a.m. on May 18, 1981. [figures for addresses, time, dates]

(4) The surplus of $37.25 was recorded on a 4" x 6" index card. [figures for amounts of money when used with a dollar sign and for measurements]
(5) Interest rates increased to $12\frac{1}{2}$ percent. [figures for numbers which involve fractions]

(6) His army serial number was 83490622. [figures for serial or code numbers]

(7) Eleven hundred and fifty union members attended the rally. [spelled-out numbers to begin sentences]

(8) Together they caught nine 8-inch trout. [spelled-out number followed by figure]

(9) In the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-one. . . [only for very formal announcements or invitations]

Another thing to consider in the mechanics of writing is the ellipsis mark, which is indicated by three spaced periods. This mark is used to indicate the omission of one or more words from a quoted passage. A regular period followed by the three spaced dots is used to indicate that a complete sentence precedes the omission or that one or more entire sentences have been omitted. A full line of spaced dots is used to indicate the omission of one or more full paragraphs in a prose quotation or the omission of one or more full lines in a poetry quotation.

"Late on the evening of his fiftieth birthday, . . . John Morgan purchased a bus ticket and left town." [ellipsis indicates an omission of words]

Karl Conrad Diller has stated, "In Montreal, children are continually exposed to two languages, but they
usually learn one. . . . Mere exposure to a foreign language either in the town or in the classroom is no guarantee that a person will learn the language." [ellipsis after a period indicates omission of one or more sentences]

"Love set you going like a fat gold watch. The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry Took its place among the elements.

And now you try
Your handful of notes;
The clear vowels rise like balloons."

(from Sylvia Plath's "Morning Song")
[full line of spaced dots indicates omission of one or more lines of poetry]
Chapter 7
Spelling

Under the general heading of spelling, there are several areas with which college writers need to be familiar. These include standard rules for capitalization, guidelines for the use of apostrophes and hyphens, and an awareness of possible misspelling due to faulty diction, or word choice.

Capitalization

While practices in capitalization do vary somewhat, the following guidelines are used by most writers: (1) the first word of each sentence (including deliberate fragments and quoted sentences) should be capitalized; (2) in titles or chapter headings, capital letters should be used for the first word, the last word, and all other words except articles, coordinating conjunctions, and short prepositions; (3) proper nouns and adjectives formed from proper nouns should be capitalized, as well as the names of specific school courses but not the names of general school subjects; (4) references to deities, names of organized religious groups, sacred texts, and adjectives formed from these names should be capitalized; (5) titles of important officials and titles of relatives should be capitalized when used with the person's name or when used in place of the
name to designate the particular individual; (6) names of specific geographic locations such as countries, cities, streets, continents, celestial bodies, lakes, mountains, and parks should be capitalized, but the names of directions should not; (7) capital letters should also be used for the names of specific buildings, both governmental and private organizations, specific brand names, and historical documents, events and eras; (8) the first word of outline headings are normally capitalized; and (9) the pronoun I, the interjection O, and many (but not all) single letters used as words should be capitalized.

(1) John likes hot Mexican food. In fact, the hotter the better. [beginnings of sentences and fragments]

As MacArthur left the Philippines, he said, "I shall return." [beginning of quoted sentences]

(2) The Decline of the Railroad in Canada [in titles]

(3) John Adams, France, McCarthyism [proper nouns]

Hollywoodish, French, Hawaiian [adjectives formed from proper nouns]

History 315, Music Appreciation, Modern Math [specific courses]

biology, anthropology, physical science [general school subjects]

(4) God, Allah, Jehovah [deities]

Catholic, Church of England, Protestant [religions]
the Bible, Koran, Genesis [sacred texts]

Gospel teachings, Moslem beliefs, Biblical scholars [adjectives formed from religious terms]

(5) Senator Hayes introduced Governor Johnson. [titles of important officials]

The gifts were from Grandpa Brown and Aunt Esther. [titles of relatives]

The Dean will not be in today. [title used in place of name]

(6) Canada, Albany, Birch Street, Europe, Saturn, Lake Louise, Mount Shasta, Pioneer Park, the South, the Far East [specific geographic locations]

(7) the Hartford Building [specific building]

Kiwanis Club [private organization]

Tide soap [brand name]

The Bill of Rights [historical document]

the Battle of Okinawa [historical event]

Renaissance [historical era]

(8) I. Financial aspects

A. Initial expenditures

1. Down payment

2. Closing costs

[first words in outline headings]

(9) It was I who broke the crystal vase. [the pronoun I]

0, to be twenty-one again. [the interjection 0]
The Apostrophe

The apostrophe is considered to be a mark used in spelling (to clarify word form) rather than a mark of punctuation (to clarify sentence structure). The apostrophe has three uses: (1) to indicate the possessive case—sometimes called the genitive case—of nouns and some pronouns, (2) to mark omissions in contracted words of numerals, and (3) to form certain plurals.

Singular nouns and some indefinite pronouns show possession by the addition of an apostrophe, followed by an _s_.

- next week's assignment [singular noun]
- Todd's dog [proper noun]
- everybody's friend [indefinite pronoun]

With inanimate objects, however, the _s_ is usually dropped completely (which makes the noun into a modifying adjective), or else the phrase is changed to include some kind of modifying prepositional phrase.

- the refrigerator door [without using _s_]
- or
- the door of the refrigerator [using a prepositional phrase]
If either a singular or plural noun or an indefinite pronoun does not already end in an s or z sound, possession is indicated by adding an apostrophe and an s.

a man's car, a quarter's worth, today's newspaper, one's life ['s added to singular nouns or indefinite pronouns]

men's cars, women's rights, children's clothing, everybody's fault ['s added to plural nouns or indefinite pronouns]

But if a plural noun does end in an s or z sound, the possessive form is made by merely adding an apostrophe.

ladies' apparel, four dollars' worth, the Joneses' boat, Teamsters' agreement [only the apostrophe added to plurals ending with s sounds]

[The apostrophes are sometimes omitted, though, from the names of organizations, as in Ranchers Cooperative Society or Delta State Teachers College.]

If a singular noun already ends in an s or z sound, an apostrophe and an s are added to words of one syllable (as in "the boss's office"). Only the apostrophe is added to words of more than one syllable (as in "Lazarus' tomb") unless the pronunciation of the second s or z sound is especially expected (as in "Eloise's purse").

Hyphenated compounds and nouns which share possession have the apostrophe in the last word only.
But if individual or separate ownership is involved, each noun takes the possessive form.

my sister-in-law's recipe [last word of hyphenated compound]

Bob and Mary's house [only one 's for joint ownership]

Bob's and Mary's jobs [separate or individual ownership]

Apostrophes should never be used with the pronouns his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs, or whose; they are unnecessary because possession is inherent to their meanings. Care should be taken to distinguish these pronouns from the contractions that sound like them: it's, who's, you're, and they're.

Its starter was broken. [indicates possession]

It's a large dog. [indicates a contraction of it is]

He is a man whose reputation is unblemished. [possession]

He is a judge who's fair. [contraction]

Your book is on the table. [possession]

You're first on the list. [contraction]

Their announcement shocked me. [possession]

They're going to work late. [contraction]
In forming contractions, apostrophes should be used where one or more letters or numerals have been omitted.

you'll    rock 'n' roll
we've    the class of '80
Jane's    shouldn't
o'clock    Everybody's happy.

Apostrophes should also be used to form the following plural spellings: (1) plural letters of the alphabet, (2) plural of words used as words, (3) plurals of abbreviations not followed by periods, (4) plurals of numerals, and (5) plurals of symbols.

(1) His o's are especially hard to read. [plural letters of the alphabet]
(2) Indeed, his loss's look like lass's. [plurals of words used as words]
(3) Ralph is concerned about the rpm's. [plurals of abbreviations not followed by periods]
(4) She lived in Europe during the 1960's. [plurals of numerals]
(5) His equation had too many +'s and too few -'s. [plurals of symbols]

The Hyphen

The hyphen, like the apostrophe, is a mark used in spelling, not a mark of punctuation. It is important that it not be confused with the dash, which is twice
as long as the hyphen and which is indeed a mark of punctuation. The functions of the hyphen are (1) to join two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun, (2) to join spelled-out compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and to join spelled-out fractions, (3) to separate the prefixes self, all, and ex (when it means former) and the suffix elect from root words, (4) to separate a prefix from a root word that is capitalized, (5) to avoid ambiguity or awkwardness between the roots of some words and their prefixes or suffixes (especially when the last letter of the prefix and the first letter of the root are the same), and (6) to divide a word, when necessary, at the end of a line. The following are examples of the uses of hyphens:

(1) off-season prices four-year-old child
    a well-known song all-too-liberal tone
    bad-smelling milk sleep-inducing medicine

(2) Thirty-nine houses were damaged by the hurricane, almost one-fourth of them beyond repair.

(3) self-made ex-husband
    all-purpose president-elect

(4) mid-July anti-Christ
    non-Catholic un-American
(5) two-bit apartment re-cover
two bit-players re-creation
re-act semi-industrial
re-enter hull-less

(6) (For details on word divisions, see the section on manuscript form above under Mechanics.)

The so-called suspended hyphen (a hyphen followed by a space before the next word) is used when a series of words all have the same second word.

Two- and three-year contracts were available. [suspended hyphen]

Pro- and anti-abortion signs were waving. [suspended hyphen]

The class included second-, third-, and fourth-grade pupils. [suspended hyphens]

It should be remembered that noncompound numbers are not hyphenated. Reasoning for this rule is that a compound number such as twenty-two really means twenty plus two, but the noncompound number one hundred does not mean one plus a hundred.

thirty-five, fifty-four [compound numbers requiring hyphens]

four hundred, eleven thousand [noncompound numbers that do not use hyphens]

It should also be remembered that while a hyphen is appropriately used to join two words serving as a
single adjective before a noun, it should not be used to join a compound modifier if the first word is an adverb ending in -ly.

- happily married couple
- rapidly melting ice
- sorely needed updating
- sadly true commentary

[no hyphen in compound modifier when first word is an adverb]

**Misspelling**

Even though spelling ability is not necessarily related to intelligence or writing ability, spelling errors—if there are any—are the first things readers notice about a piece of writing. A large number of misspelled words will undoubtedly cause the writer to be judged ignorant or, at least, careless. Aside from simply making a bad impression on readers, misspelled words can detract the readers from the subject matter and sometimes actually confuse readers about intended meaning. The best safeguard against this is to keep a good dictionary handy while writing, to refer to whenever a question about spelling comes up.

Many times so-called misspellings are not actual spelling errors but, rather, errors in diction (or word choice). This problem arises when two or more similar-sounding words are confused. The following is a list of commonly confused words, with very
brief definitions to help differentiate between the words in question. (These are the abbreviations used in the list to indicate the most frequently used parts of speech: n. = noun; v. = verb; adj. = adjective; adv. = adverb; conj. = conjunction; contr. = contractions; pro. = pronoun; prep. = preposition; poss. = possessive; sing. = singular; and pl. = plural.)

accept: (v.) to receive or approve
except: (prep.) not included
access: (n.) an approach or entrance
assess: (v.) to place a value on
excess: (n.) an amount greater than necessary
accent: (v.) to emphasize
ascent: (n.) an upward slope
assent: (n.) consent or agreement
advice: (n.) suggestions or counsel given
advise: (v.) to give suggestions or counsel
affect: (v.) to influence
effect: (n.) the result of some action
effect: (v.) to bring about or accomplish
aisle: (n.) a passageway between rows of seats
isle: (n.) an island
all ready: (n. + adj.) everyone is prepared
already: (adv.) previously or at this time
all together: (n. + adj.) all in one place
altogether: (adv.) totally, completely
allude: (v.) to refer indirectly to
elude: (v.) to escape or evade
allusion: (n.) an indirect or casual reference
illusion: (n.) a false idea or an unreal image
aloud: (adv.) with a great noise
allowed: (v. in past tense) permitted
altar: (n.) a platform or table for sacred purposes
alter: (v.) to change
always: (adv.) constantly, at all times
all ways: (determiner + n.) in every way
anecdote: (n.) a short entertaining story
antidote: (n.) a remedy to counteract poison
angel: (n.) a heavenly being or messenger of God
angle: (n.) the shape or space made by two straight lines that meet
arc: (n.) a curved line, part of a circle
arch: (n.) a curved structure over an open space in a building
ascent: (n.) the act of rising: an upward slope
ascent: (v.) to agree, to concur
ascent: (n.) an agreement, consent
assistance: (n.) help or aid given
assistants: (n. pl.) those who aid; helpers
band: (n.) a group of people; musicians
banned: (v., past participle) prohibited, forbidden
bare: (adj.) simple, plain, uncovered
bear: (n.) four-legged hairy animal
bear: (v.) to carry, to give birth, to endure
 berth: (n.) a place where a ship anchors; a built-in bed on a train or ship
birth: (n.) being born, a beginning
boar: (n.) a male wild hog
bore: (v.) to make a hole with a drill
bore: (n.) a tiresome or dull person
boarder: (n.) one who pays for lodging and food
border: (n.) a boundary or a part near an edge
born: (v.) brought into life, as if from birth
borne: (v., past participle) carried, endured, given birth to
brake: (n.) a device for slowing or stopping a vehicle
break: (v.) to split or crack into pieces
breath: (n.) air inhaled and exhaled
breathe: (v.) to take air in and out of the lungs
canvas: (n.) a kind of coarse cloth
canvass: (v.) to solicit votes, opinions, or orders from people
capital: (n.) a city that is the seat of government; money owned
capitol: (n.) a building used by a legislature
censor: (v.) to prohibit publication
censor: (n.) a person who prohibits publication
censure: (v.) to reprimand or show disapproval
censure: (n.) strong disapproval
choose: (v.) to select
chose: (v., past tense) selected
cite: (v.) to quote: to summon to a court of law
sight: (n.) something seen
site: (n.) a location or scene
coarse: (adj.) rough, unrefined, harsh
course: (n.) a school subject: a path or way
complement: (n.) that which completes or perfects
compliment: (n.) a courteous statement of praise
conscience: (n.) what tells a person right from wrong

conscious: (adj.) awake, aware of oneself

consul: (n.) a government official assigned to a foreign city

council: (n.) an administrative group

counsel: (v.) to give advice or recommendation

counsel: (n.) advice given; a lawyer or group of lawyers

decent: (adj.) respectable, proper

descent: (n.) a coming down; a downward slope

dissent: (v.) to disagree

dissent: (n.) a difference of opinion

desert: (n.) a dry barren region

desert: (v.) to abandon

dessert: (n.) food, the last course of a meal

device: (n.) a mechanical contrivance

devise: (v.) to work out a plan or method

dew: (n.) atmospheric moisture

do: (v.) to perform an act

due: (adj.) owing; used with to to equal caused by

dual: (adj.) double, twofold

duel: (n.) a prearranged fight between two people
dyeing: (v., present participle) applying color
dying: (v., present participle) expiring, passing from life

eminent: (adj.) famous, prominent
imminent: (adj.) likely to happen soon

envelop: (v.) to wrap up or enclose
envelope: (n.) a folded paper container for a letter

extant: (adj.) still existing
extent: (n.) the amount or degree of something

formally: (adv.) in a manner prescribed by customs or rules
formerly: (adv.) in the past

forth: (adv.) forward, onward
fourth: (n.) the one following the third in a series

holy: (adj.) sacred, godly
wholly: (adv.) entirely, totally

human: (adj.) pertaining to mankind
humane: (adj.) characterized by kindness

instance: (n.) an example or occasion
instants: (n.) moments

its: (poss. pro.) belonging to it
it's: (contr.) it is or it has
later: (adj.) after the expected time, more recent
latter: (adj.) the last one mentioned of two
lead: (v., pronounced leed) to conduct or go before
lead: (n., pronounced led) a bluish-gray metallic element
led: (v., past tense) conducted, went before
lessen: (v.) to decrease or diminish
lesson: (n.) a course of instruction
loose: (adj.) not firmly fastened
lose: (v., pronounced looze) to misplace; to be defeated
marital: (adj.) pertaining to marriage
martial: (adj.) military
maybe: (adv.) perhaps
may be: (v.) possibly could occur
passed: (v., past tense) moved forward or onward
past: (n.) of a former time
patience: (sing. n.) calm endurance
patients: (pl. n.) people receiving medical care
plain: (adj.) not ornate, simple
plane: (n.) an airplane or a carpenter's tool
peace: (n.) freedom from war

piece: (n.) a section of a whole

personal: (adj.) private

personnel: (n.) people who are employed by a company or organization

presence: (n.) attendance

presents: (n.) gifts

principal: (n.) person in charge of a school; the amount of a debt

principal: (adj.) chief, most important

principle: (n.) a rule or fundamental truth

prophecy: (n., pronounced propheceē) a prediction about the future

prophecy: (v., pronounced prophesī) to utter predictions

quiet: (adj.) noiseless, motionless

quite: (adv.) very, to a considerable degree

quit: (v.) stop

sense: (n.) ability to reason; the meaning

since: (prep. + conj.) after a certain time; because

shone: (v., past participle) did shine

shown: (v., past participle) exhibited

stationary: (adj.) fixed, not moving

stationery: (n.) writing paper and envelopes
than: (prep.) compared to
then: (n. + adv.) at another time; as a result
their: (poss. pro.) belonging to them
there: (n. + adv.) a place; an expletive with which to begin sentences
to: (prep.) indicating direction
too: (adv.) more than enough
two: (n.) the number between one and three
vale: (n.) a valley
veil: (n.) light fabric worn over the face
vice: (n.) an immoral action or habit
vise: (n.) a device for firmly holding an object
weather: (n.) the condition of the atmosphere
whether: (conj.) introducing alternatives
whose: (poss. pro.) belonging to whom
who's: (contr.) who is or who has
your: (poss. pro.) belonging to you
you're: (contr.) you are
Chapter 8
Effective Sentences

In order to produce overall good prose, writers must first be able to write effective individual sentences. The most essential qualities of effective sentences are sound logic, unity, and coherence. Other qualities also important for sentence effectiveness in terms of structure are the use of subordination and parallelism, and in terms of style, proper emphasis and variety.

**Sound Logic**

Sentences should be well thought out in order to avoid errors or weaknesses in logic. Faulty logic results (1) from jumping to a conclusion (making a generalization) that cannot be substantiated by the evidence presented or (2) from using evidence that is irrelevant to the assertion being made.

**FAULTY** Crime is on the upsweep because all parents have stopped teaching their children about honesty and responsibility. [sweeping generalization; needs qualification such as replacing all with many, in order to be reasonable or logical]

**LOGIC**

**FAULTY** Marge was a beautiful homecoming queen; she will be a perfect wife for some young man. [evidence (that she was beautiful) not relevant to the assertion being made (that she'll be a good wife)]

**LOGIC**
Unity

Effective sentences, in order to have both unity and logic, should contain only ideas which are related in a manner which should be immediately clear to the reader. If the ideas are not related closely enough, they should be put into two or more sentences or else rewritten to establish a clear relationship between them.

| UNRELATED | Related John kissed his wife goodnight, and she cleaned out the refrigerator and freezer. [lacks unity] |
| UNRELATED | There are many excellent professors at the university, but I prefer to work full time. [lacks unity] |
| RELATED | The fact that there are many excellent professors at the university tempts me to go back to school, but I still prefer working full time. [sentence revised to show a clear relationship between the ideas] |
Coherence

For a sentence to have coherence, its different parts or segments must follow one another naturally and logically. Care should be taken, therefore, to prevent needless separation of the parts of the sentence which are related. Indeed, since the English language frequently depends upon word order for meaning, the proper positioning of the parts of the sentence is essential to insure clear communication and to avoid having misplaced or dangling modifiers.

A misplaced modifier is one which seems to modify the wrong word or words.

**MISPLACED**  
Jones was informed that his services would no longer be needed by the personnel department. [meaning confused because of faulty word order]

**MODIFIER**

**REvised**  
Jones was informed by the personnel department that his services would no longer be needed. [coherence improved by putting sentence parts in logical order]

**MISPLACED**  
All of the students have been baptized in this classroom. [modifying clause too far from the subject--students--which it should modify]

**MODIFIER**

**REvised**  
All of the students in this classroom have been baptized. [improved coherence]
A dangling modifier usually refers to a verbal or elliptical phrase that comes before the main clause of a sentence (hence, *dangling* at the beginning) which does not clearly modify the subject of the sentence as normal English word order requires it to do.

**DANGLING**  
Looking out of the window,
the sun rose majestically.

**MODIFIER**  
[sounds as if the sun were looking out of the window]

**REVISED**  
Looking out of the window, I saw the sun rise majestically.

or

While looking out of the window,  
I saw the sun rise majestically.  
[subject revised to relate to initial phrase]

A participial phrase (which includes an *-ed* or *-ing* word) is not considered to be dangling when used to refer to a general truth or when used in an absolute construction. (An *absolute phrase* is a group of words which modifies a whole clause or a whole sentence but which is not linked to the clause or sentence by a conjunction, relative pronoun, or the preposition *with*. An absolute phrase usually consists of a noun or noun substitute followed by an adjective or a participle.)

**PROPER**  
Generally speaking, a busy

**ABSOLUTE**  
person is a happy person.

**CONSTRUCTIONS**  
[refers to a general truth]
(not dangling) All things being equal, it should be a good race. [refers to general truth]

The Good Lord willing, we'll meet again Tuesday. [noun plus present participle]

The man stood in the doorway, his clothes soaked. [noun plus past participle]

Subordination

In order to relate ideas concisely in effective sentences, good writers often rely a great deal on subordination, putting less important elements into dependent clauses and more important elements into main or independent clauses. Excessive use of coordination (which stresses equal importance of ideas) shows up as too many short simple sentences or as strung-together compound sentences. Excessive use of coordination frequently indicates an inexperienced writer; whereas, effective use of subordination (which minimizes some ideas in order to focus on or highlight other ones) generally marks a mature writing style.

COORDINATION Last night Jim was walking along Pepper Street. He was coming home from baseball practice. He saw a terrible accident. Three cars were involved. A man was killed. [all ideas given equal importance]
SUBORDINATION While walking along Pepper Street on his way home from baseball practice last night, Jim saw a terrible three-car accident in which a man was killed. [less-important ideas subordinated]

COORDINATION Sometimes I feel that it is not worthwhile to work such long hours and I consider taking a few days off to relax, but then I realize I would have to work all the harder to catch up, so I keep right on working. [four equally important main clauses, confusing to the reader]

SUBORDINATION Even though I get tired of putting in such long hours, I keep on working because it would be too hard to catch up after taking a vacation. [only one main clause: I keep on working]

Parallelism

Parallelism (produced by using the same grammatical structure for elements of the sentence which function the same way) is important in writing for many reasons. It holds sentences together by providing a satisfying rhythm, fulfilling a basic human desire for balance and symmetry. Parallelism also helps the writer to organize the ideas he or she is trying to express, and it helps the reader to understand and remember those ideas. This quality of parallelism helps many proverbs and famous quotations (which often use parallel structure) stick in the
Give me liberty or give me death. [balanced structure, uses repetition of same phrase]

I came, I saw, I conquered. [parallel use of past tense verbs]

The need for balanced parallel structure exists on all levels of writing: with words, with phrases, with clauses, and with sentences. This means, for instance, that nouns should be balanced with nouns, a passive verb with a passive verb, an infinitive phrase with an infinitive phrase, a simple sentence with a simple sentence, etc. Faulty parallelism exists when comparable ideas do not share the same grammatical form. This is especially common in a series in which some of the items in the series fail to follow the same grammatical pattern begun by the first item.

**NOT PARALLEL**

I like to swim and horseback riding. [infinitive and present participle]

**PARALLEL**

I like to swim and to ride horses. [balanced infinitive phrases]

**NOT PARALLEL**

She admired the actress not for her beauty, but because of her acting ability. [grammatical structure not parallel]

**PARALLEL**

She admired the actress not for her beauty, but for her acting ability. [parallel prepositional phrases]
NOT PARALLEL  We were told to paint with water colors, that we should use heavy tag paper, and we should put our signatures on the lower right corner. [mixed construction]

PARALLEL  We were told to paint with water colors, to use heavy tag paper, and to sign our names on the lower right corner. [parallel infinitive phrases]

Emphasis

While emphasis is easy to achieve in speech (through the use of facial expressions, loudness of voice, pauses, and gestures), it is not easy to achieve in writing. Too often students will rely heavily on graphic devices such as underlining, using all capital letters, or using exclamation points in order to emphasize certain ideas. Overuse of such devices, though, tends to give the impression of hysteria, of too much emphasis. A much better way to achieve emphasis is through wise choice of words and through careful sentence construction. Strategic positioning of material within the sentence is a big factor in effecting emphasis. For instance, placing important information at the very end of the sentence (and sometimes at the beginning) gives it more emphasis and therefore last attention.

Several different sentence structures work to produce emphasis. They are (1) periodic structure,
(2) adverbial phrase beginning, (3) conjunctive adverb beginning—or near the beginning, and (4) inverted structure. Arranging information in climactic order, using subordination, and using the active voice are other means of obtaining emphasis.

Periodic structure, which can be easily seen in short simple sentences, introduces the topic first and the comment on the topic last (the comment presumably being the more important of the two).

Guns kill. [periodic sentence]
Conviction would mean seven years in state prison. [periodic sentence]

This same periodic structure is also effective in longer, complex sentences, which means that the subordinate clause would be put first and the main clause last.

LESS Almost eight million Americans between the ages of twenty and seventy-four are severely overweight, according to what the National Center for Health Statistics said after a recent survey. [a rather "ho-hum" statement]

EMPHATIC

MORE A recent survey by the National Center for Health Statistics shows that almost eight million Americans between the ages of twenty and seventy-four are severely overweight. [main point of the sentence at the end]
Putting adverbial phrases (the ones which express time, place, cause, manner, or degree) at the beginning of the sentence is a good way to achieve emphasis because it then allows the subject or direct object to be placed in the prime emphatic position at the end of the sentence.

LESS An enormous sparkling diamond was in the small black box.
EMPHATIC [adverbial phrase at the end]

MORE In the small black box was an enormous sparkling diamond.
EMPHATIC [adverbial phrase at the beginning]

Conjunctive adverbs (such as however, whereas, moreover, therefore, etc.) tend to qualify the clauses or sentences that they occur in. Those clauses or sentences will be more emphatic if the conjunctive adverbs are placed at or near the beginnings of those clauses or sentences.

LESS Overeating is dangerous for one's health; many people ignore this fact, however. [conjunctive adverb at the end of second clause]
EMPHATIC

MORE Overeating is dangerous for one's health; however, many people ignore this fact. [conjunctive adverb at beginning of clause]
EMPHATIC

Emphasis can also be achieved by inverting the expected word order of clauses and sentences. (Normal
word order is subject-verb-object or subject-verb-complement.) By inverting this order, greater emphasis results because the reader's attention is focused on the inverted words.

LESS Though Dr. Fox was busy, he always took time to explain things. [normal subject-verb-complement word order]

EMPHATIC Busy though Dr. Fox was, he always took time to explain things. [inverted sentence structure]

MORE Busy though Dr. Fox was, he always took time to explain things. [inverted sentence structure]

Another good way of insuring proper emphasis is by putting words, phrases, and clauses in climactic order, saving the most important for the last.

LESS For his graduation, Mark received a brand new Mustang II, a handsome Palm Beach suit, and a new baseball glove. [anti-climactic ending]

EMPHATIC For his graduation, Mark received a brand new Mustang II, a handsome Palm Beach suit, and a new baseball glove. [anti-climactic ending]

MORE For his graduation, Mark received a brand new Mustang II, a handsome Palm Beach suit, and a new baseball glove. [emphasis achieved through use of climactic order]

EMPHATIC For his graduation, Mark received a brand new Mustang II, a handsome Palm Beach suit, and a new baseball glove. [emphasis achieved through use of climactic order]

There are times, however, when climactic order is purposely reversed in order to put over a humorous effect.

During her years in Paris, she was the sole provider for her parents, she graduated with honors, and she learned to dance a mean fandango. [anticlimactic order for humorous effect]
Careful use of coordination and subordination is especially important in emphasizing certain facts. Generally, the most important ideas should be put in main clauses and the less important ideas in subordinate clauses. Simple coordination should be used only to connect ideas of equal importance.

**UNEMPHATIC**  
John returned from his first year at Harvard, and he had grown six inches. [the two clauses treated equally through use of coordination]

**EMPHATIC**  
When John returned from his first year at Harvard, we saw that he had grown six inches. [last clause given importance through subordination of the first]

Another way of effecting emphasis is through the use of **active voice**. In spite of the fact that some student writers believe that the **passive voice** gives some kind of dignity and authority to a sentence, overuse of passive construction actually prevents proper emphasis and tends to sound dull and wordy to the reader.

**UNEMPHATIC**  
It is claimed by the author that the trade agreement was violated by the Iranians. [passive voice]

**EMPHATIC**  
The author claimed that the Iranians violated the trade agreement. [active voice]

Finally, within the whole paragraph, emphasis can be achieved by using different sentence lengths,
especially by placing very important information into a short sentence in the middle of a number of long sentences.

Variety

If all of the sentences in a paragraph were of similar length, structure, and complexity, the passage would be unbearably monotonous. Consequently, the writer, as a courtesy to his reader, should make sure that his or her sentences show variety in those areas. The most common way in which students show lack of variety is in the length of sentences, by having an overabundance of short sentences. Fortunately this fault, once noticed, can easily be corrected by simply combining some of the shorter sentences into one.

Other means of adding special interest and variety to one's writing might be to use occasionally—but in fact, quite sparingly—rhetorical questions, inversions of syntax, and deliberate sentence fragments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMPLE</th>
<th>Everyone has heard of Paul Newman. Most people do not know that he is a racecar driver.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SENTENCES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHETORICAL</td>
<td>Who has not heard of Paul Newman? But few people know that he is a racecar driver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMPLE</td>
<td>They wanted me to take in more work. I do not need more work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENTENCES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They wanted me to take in more work. **More work I do not need.**

Even though sentence fragments are not acceptable for usual college-level expository writing, short fragments can occasionally be used in more informal writing to achieve emphasis, transition, or humorous anticlimax.

**FRAGMENT FOR** The principal said that we would have to give up assemblies. **Give up assemblies!**

**FRAGMENT FOR** We have already discussed the advantages of year-round schooling. **Now for the disadvantages.**

**FRAGMENT FOR** Finally, she got over her craving for dill pickles. **Well, almost.**
Chapter 9
Effective Paragraphs

Even though paragraphs do not figure at all in speaking, they are very important in writing. A comparatively recent addition to the English language, they have now become indispensable physical and mental convenience for readers. Physically, they provide a visual break in the material, helping readers to keep their places on the page. Mentally, they represent separate and complete units of thought. They also provide a special convenience for writers in that they provide a manageable structure into which they can organize their ideas.

A paragraph is commonly defined as "a group of related sentences dealing with a single topic or idea." It often starts with a topic sentence which summarizes that idea, followed by other sentences that explain, support, qualify, or analyze the idea.

There are no hard-and-fast rules governing the length of paragraphs. Occasionally a one-sentence paragraph is needed to make a transition between larger sections of a paper or to make an especially dramatic effect, but ordinarily paragraphs have somewhere between three and ten sentences, depending upon the complexity of the idea being discussed. (Newspapers and magazines typically use very short paragraphs because of the narrow columns and the
necessity for an open and inviting appearance. These short paragraphs should not be used as models for college expository writing.) Even though paragraphs vary greatly in content, length, and organization, to be effective they should have a topic sentence with a controlling idea, unity, coherence, and adequate development.

**Topic Sentences**

The topic sentence is important for several reasons. Usually placed near the beginning of the paragraph, it serves to tell the reader what the main idea of the paragraph is. It gives a broad general statement about the subject and includes the controlling idea which gives direction to the paragraph's development. It also indicates to the reader that the writer will deliver some specific facts to support that general statement. And its controlling idea acts in a way to limit the subject, assuring the reader that only those details which pertain to the controlling idea will be included in the paragraph.

In order to write good topic sentences, the writer must be able to differentiate between general statements and specific statements. General statements are broad sweeping assertions which contain the writer's opinion. Specific statements, on the other
hand, contain concrete details and facts which refer to individual names, specific places, numbers or statistics, detailed descriptions, and direct quotations. It has been said that these specifics are the substance of writing, that which convinces the reader that the writer knows what he or she is talking about. Indeed, there is simply no way that general statements can be adequately supported by more generalizations. That would be as unconvincing as saying, "America is a great country because it is a good place to live." Good generalizations can often be made by asking one's self simple questions and answering them in a way that will leave the reader wanting to know more or wanting to know why.

QUESTION What kind of a week did you have?
ANSWER My week was an exciting one. [general statement; calls for details in order to be convincing]

QUESTION What are Japanese people like?
ANSWER The Japanese are industrious people. [general statement; calls for facts to support it]

The following, then, is an example of a specific statement:

On Monday I flew to New York City, landing at Kennedy Airport just in
time to see Frank Sinatra getting off a flight from London. [gives specific day, places, and person's name]

A good topic sentence calls for more than a simple generalization. It actually calls for three distinct parts: a subject, a verb, and a controlling idea. The subject indicates what the sentence is all about; the verb makes a statement about that subject; and the controlling idea usually comes last, describing or making a judgment about the subject.

Everyone agrees that Marsha Smith is creative. [The controlling idea here indicates that the paragraph will deal only with Marsha Smith's creativity.]

But this topic sentence is still too broad, still tries to cover too large an area and should thus be improved by limiting the controlling idea.

Marsha Smith's reputation for creativity stems mainly from her achievements as a writer of short stories. [This controlling idea gives a specific direction for the development of the paragraph.]

Another example of how a broad topic sentence can be revised or refined is the following:

RUDIMENTARY TOPIC SENTENCE E. B. White's Charlotte's Web is a great children's story. [too general]
Unity

Unity, a quality of oneness, is a desirable attribute in almost every area of civilized life: music, painting, engineering, sports, politics, advertising, landscaping, and even wardrobe planning. It is especially necessary in an effective paragraph. A paragraph has unity only if each of its sentences contributes to the controlling thought expressed by the topic sentence. And by the same token, a paragraph lacks unity if any of its sentences go off on tangents to talk about the subject in a way that's not directly related to the controlling idea of the topic sentence.

One way to insure paragraph unity is to see to it that the main clause of each sentence supports the controlling idea of the topic sentence. This doesn't mean that all more loosely related ideas necessarily have to be thrown out, but that they do need to be put into subordinate clauses. It is a good idea to check for main clause unity by underlining the subject and verb of each main clause in the rough draft to determine whether or not each main clause actually does support the controlling idea.
If the information in these main clauses continually points in a direction different from that of the topic sentence, then the topic sentence will need to be modified to fit the actual facts in the main clauses. (Such a process of modification frequently allows the writer to discover new ideas and hypotheses.)

Coherence

Coherence, the companion of unity, is another quality absolutely essential in an effective paragraph. While unity deals with the relationship between the topic sentences and each of the sentences that follow, coherence involves the relationship that occurs among the different sentences within the paragraph to each other. Coherence is what makes those sentences hold together (or cohere) and move smoothly from one to another.

There are several means by which a writer achieves coherence in paragraphs. Included among them are (1) arranging sentences in logical order, (2) repeating or referring to key words in the paragraph, (3) using transitional expressions, and (4) using parallel structure. (Overall coherence in the whole composition also requires adequate transition between paragraphs.)

The arranging of sentences in logical order
can follow several different strategies, depending upon the nature of the material and the writer's purpose. A chronological arrangement or time order is especially useful in writing narrative paragraphs. Closely related to that is the sequence order which is necessary in the explaining of a process, showing step by step how something is done or made. Sentences that have no evident time or sequence order can be arranged in space order, in which the material can be ordered from left to right, from north to south, from top to bottom, from inside to outside, etc. Another good way to arrange sentences within a paragraph is in climactic order, from the least important to the most important. And finally, one of the most common arrangements is funnel order, from the general to the particular, as discussed in the previous section about the topic sentence and supporting detail.

Another equally important method of achieving coherence is by repeating or referring to key words in the paragraph. This is often done by using pronouns to refer to preceding nouns or other pronouns, thereby keeping the reader's attention focused on the central person, object, or idea of the paragraph. Sometimes this repetition involves the use of synonyms, which means that different words rename but still focus on the subject.
One of the most common ways of achieving coherence within paragraphs is through the use of transitional words or phrases. The word "transition" comes from the Latin word "transire," which means "to pass over or across." Transitions, then, act like bridges that connect in two directions at the same time, backward with what has already been written and forward with what the writer intends to write. Some of the most frequently used transitional expressions are the following:

**TO INDICATE**
- and, also, again, besides,
- in addition, first, moreover,
- next, second, similarly,
- subsequently

**AN ADDITION**
- but, yet, or, nor, conversely,
- however, nevertheless,
- on the other hand, on the contrary, still

**TO INDICATE**
- for example, for instance,
- thus, that is, namely, as
- an illustration, specifically

**AN EXAMPLE**
- consequently, therefore, thus,
- accordingly, in conclusion,
- then, finally, last, in other words, as a result, to conclude, hence, in brief, in short, to sum up

**TO INDICATE**
- in like manner, also, likewise,
- similarly, too, by the same token, by contrast
Finally, another excellent means for insuring paragraph coherence is through the use of parallel structure, that is, by incorporating those same principles discussed above in the section on sentence parallelism, only here on the paragraph level. This means that individual sentences within the paragraph can sometimes be balanced with each other through the use of similar syntactic structures, thereby linking the ideas in the paragraph together.

Adequate Development

One typical characteristic of many college student papers is the serious and persistent problem of underdeveloped paragraphs. Sometimes this problem even leads to other difficulties such as lack of unity and lack of coherence; for example, students will sometimes notice that their paragraphs (containing only one or two sentences) are too short and so will join two of them that do not actually have any relationship to each other, thus spoiling any unity of thought and coherence. Unfortunately, there is
no set formula for insuring adequate paragraph development. The amount of development necessary depends upon the paper's subject, purpose, and audience. Writers often have enough information for well-developed paragraphs, but they don't know how to logically and interestingly arrange their material. Some options for development would be those that were discussed above in the section on logical order under the subheading of coherence. Other types of paragraph development can be achieved by giving special attention to (1) definition, (2) detail, (3) cause and effect, (4) comparison and contrast, (5) process, or (6) analogy.

When paragraph development focuses on definition, it should include more than a mere phrase or simple sentence quoted from the dictionary. In fact, for clarification it is often useful to tell what the term or subject is not. Definition is an especially effective type of development for specifying the exact intended meaning of technical or abstract terms or for explaining a familiar term which is being used in an unusual way. This type of development can also present different classifications and examples of a given subject.

Development by the use of detail is one of the most common and most useful means of expanding
upon a subject. This kind of paragraph often begins with a general statement followed by supporting facts, examples, or illustrations. Because these concrete and specific details create images in the reader's mind, this type of development is especially suited to descriptive writing. Also, because such specific facts and examples are essential for supporting the writer's position, this type of development is most useful in argumentative writing.

When the purpose of a paragraph is to explain why a certain condition exists or used to exist, it is appropriate to use paragraph development which emphasizes cause and effect. Normally the effect (or condition) is stated first, and the causes (or reasons) are presented afterwards. Because the ideas behind causes and effects can be very complex, they oftentimes require several paragraphs or a whole paper for full development. However, one single paragraph can be used to summarize all the causes and effects, with subsequent paragraphs explaining each cause and effect in detail.

A paragraph which attempts to analyze two or more things which share some common features can be appropriately developed by means of comparison and contrast. The material in such paragraphs can be handled in several different ways. For instance, the paragraph can show contrast only, discussing only the
differences between the two things being considered. The opposite is also true; that is, the paragraph can compare only, focusing only on the similarities. When doing both, though, the comparisons and contrasts may be addressed point by point (that is, A is ambitious and B is lazy; A is rich and B is poor.), or all of the characteristics of one subject may be presented first, followed by all of the characteristics of the other subject. When the two subjects are discussed separately, as in the latter case, two different paragraphs are often required for the analysis.

A development describing a process is called for when a paragraph has to present an account of how something is made or done. If the purpose of the paragraph is to give merely a general description, specific details will not be given. However, the order of the steps described should still be made clear to the reader through the arrangement of the sentences and through the use of such indicative words as first, next, then, after, and finally. If the reader is expected to carry out the process (as in a recipe), though, much more specific step-by-step details must be given in order for the paragraph to be fully developed and for the reader's questions to be answered.

Development by analogy is a good option when the reader wants to explain concepts or objects that
are unfamiliar to the reader, by comparing them to things which are familiar to the reader. Analogy indicates a resemblance between two things, not of the actual things themselves, but of some of their attributes. For instance, the analogy between sleep and death alludes to both states' having an appearance of repose and inactivity, not to their being basically the same. Development by the use of analogy involves complex abstractions and can be very effective, as evidenced in such instances as the parables of Jesus in the New Testament.
Conclusion

Acceptable usage (grammar), proper punctuation and mechanics, correct spelling, effective sentences, effective paragraphs, and logical and complete development of ideas are the attributes of good college writing. Because so many students entering college have not acquired the basic skills necessary for academic writing, because these basic skills are not being widely taught in the classroom, and because many teachers are not elaborating on these aspects of writing in their written comments on student papers, one-to-one tutoring has indeed become essential as a means of helping remedial students to consciously achieve this necessary level of writing skills. It follows, then, that ultimately the success of a tutoring program depends on its having tutors who are good writers themselves and who have an explicit knowledge of the rules and principles of good writing.
Selected Bibliography


